

Worship for August 8, 2021

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

John R. Thomas

Call to Worship

Isaiah 40:31

Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles,

They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

We come to worship the holy One who meets us where we are.

We come to open ourselves to God, who lifts us up.

*Hymn I Sing the Mighty Power of God

Glory to God 32

Old Testament Reading and Prayer of Confession Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Men: Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

Women: If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, who could stand?

But, there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

All: My soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning.

More than those who watch for the morning.

Response

Take, O Take Me As I Am

Glory to God 698

Assurance of Forgiveness

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love,

and with him is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Be at peace.

Time With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading

Matthew 11:28-30

Morning Message

William Barclay interprets the words of this passage a little differently:

“Come to me, all you who are exhausted and weighted down beneath your burdens, and I will give you rest.”

In this text, Jesus is speaking to people who were desperately trying to find God, desperately trying to be good, and who were finding the tasks impossible. They were worn out and driven to fatigue and despair.

So, when Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are exhausted, he is speaking to people trying to be faithful Jews in that day, keeping all the laws, rules, and obligations laid upon them. This practice was known as “the yoke of the Pharisees,” the burdensome yoke of self-righteousness and legalistic law-keeping.

According to biblical scholarship, the Pharisees had added over 600 regulations to the proper observance of not working on the Sabbath. Working on the Sabbath is prohibited according to the Law, the Decalogue, what we call the Ten Commandments.

So, we can easily see why a person would find their faith less joy and more burden under this system. It was impossible to adhere to such a complicated system. Jesus has come to change the system and he invites everyone to join him.

In *The Message*, the Bible interpreted by Eugene Peterson, we hear it this way:

“Are you tired? Are you worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me. And you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

I could respond to an invitation like that. It’s hopeful. It’s winsome.

For the religious orthodox, being a faithful Jew was a real burden. It was oppressive. We can look back with the help of social science and see that the goal of a rigid rule system is to establish control over a group of people. The Pharisees maintained control and wielded power because they made the rules.

Jesus said of them, “They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to the bone, and lay them on men’s shoulders.” For the Jews, religion was a life of rule-keeping that affected every aspect of their lives. Barclay says they had to listen for the voice that continually said, “Thou shalt not.” The rabbis were aware of this oppression. There is a poignant story that illustrates the tragedy of the system: (Page 18, *The Gospel of Matthew*, William Barclay, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia.)

The yoke of Jesus is different. It is his desire that we take his yoke upon ourselves. There is a legend that, as a carpenter, Jesus would make yokes for beasts of burden, ox yokes in particular. A yoke had to be custom-made for an animal. The animal was brought to the shop. Measurements were taken. The yoke was roughed out. Then there was a second fitting. Adjustments were made. It had to be smooth so as not to hurt the animal which would enable him to labor effectively.

The legend goes that Jesus made the best ox-yokes around. In that day, as well as ours, a sign would hang over a shop, identifying the nature of the service or business. Over Jesus' shop, a sign read, "My yokes fit well."

What does Jesus want for his followers, for those called by his name? let's try this on for size: "My yoke fits well. The life I give you is not a burden to gall you. Your task, your life, is tailor-made for you. In this life, find joy. Find fulfillment. Find peace."

The rabbis used to say, "My burden has become my song."

We all have burdens. Work that is hard, but necessary. It's not always physical labor. Sometimes the burden is a deeply emotional one.

My husband and his brother have been trying to sell the family home for over two years. It has been unsuccessful. There is great frustration. But, if Covid has a silver lining, it has been that it allowed them to set aside this burden for many months.

Recently, they reached out in a new direction for assistance and the weight of this task has become lighter. We are hopeful.

The Christian's burden, or work, is simply to love God and love others. This is grace. It is then that our burden becomes a song.

There is an old story in which a man comes upon two children. A little boy carrying an even smaller boy, who was lame, on his back. The man said to the child, "That's a heavy burden for you to carry."

And the little boy responded, "That's not a burden, sir, that's my wee brother."

May all your burdens be given and borne in love, and may they all be light.

*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed Glory to God p. 35

*Gloria Patri

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Prayer of Dedication

**Lord of abundance, help us who have received so freely from you,
to give as freely in our turn,
and so, have the pleasure of giving
as well as the joy of receiving. Amen.**

*Hymn Love Lifted Me

*Blessing

Go out and imitate God, living in love.

Put your hope in God's Word

and let your own words be truthful and constructive.

Though sin may stir your anger,

never let anger cause you to sin.

And may God always hear your voice.

May Christ Jesus raise you to new life;

and may the Holy Spirit nourish you for the life of love and grace. Amen.

*Postlude

Announcements

Join us for the Ice Cream Social at the home of Steve and Karen Gold, tonight at 6PM. Bring cookies or ice cream to share, a lawn chair, and your swimsuit if you plan to swim.

A bridal shower for Mackenzie Cassidy will be held next week, August 15, at 3 PM in the fellowship hall.

We will celebrate the Sacrament of Communion next Sunday in worship.